

CATHERINE'S LITERARY WORK

choosing Lady Poverty, the Queen, as their bride, with whom they become mistresses of all spiritual wealth :—

"Then that soul, as though inebriated and enamoured of true and holy Poverty, passing out of herself into the supreme eternal Greatness, and transformed in the abyss of the sovereign inestimable Providence (in such wise that, while still in the vessel of the body, she saw herself out of the body by the overshadowing and rapture of the fire of Its charity), kept the eye of her understanding fixed upon the Divine Majesty, saying to the supreme and eternal Father : 'O eternal Father, O fire and abyss of Charity, O eternal Beauty, O eternal Goodness, O eternal Clemency, O hope and refuge of sinners, O inestimable Bounty, O eternal and infinite Bliss! Thou that art mad with love, hast Thou any need of Thy creature ? Yea, it seemeth to me that Thou dost act as though Thou couldst not live without her, albeit Thou art the life from which all things have life and without which nothing lives. Why, then, art Thou thus mad ? Thou art mad, because Thou art enamoured of what Thou hast made. Within Thyself Thou didst take delight in her, and, as drunk with desire of her salvation, Thou dost seek her when she flies from Thee ; she shuns Thee, and Thou drawest near her. Nearer to her Thou couldst not come than to clothe Thyself with her humanity. What then shall I say ? I will do as one that is tongue-tied, and say : *Ah, Ah*; for there is nought else I can say, since finite speech cannot express the affection of the soul which desires Thee infinitely. Methinks I can say with Paul : *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*, the things which I have beheld. I have seen the hidden things of God. My soul, thou hast tasted and seen the abyss of the sovereign and eternal Providence.' "¹

Obedience is the special virtue that ruled Catherine's spiritual life, even as poverty had informed that of St. Francis and the realization of justice had been the inspiration of that of Dante.

¹ Cap. 153. Catherine's treatment of holy Poverty, cap. 151, is thoroughly Franciscan. It is curious to notice how loosely she often quotes the Scriptures; Fra Raimondo usually corrects her in his Latin version.